



**European Movement
Mouvement Européen**

Lowering the active right to vote to increase the active citizenship of young Europeans

The divide between the democratic institutions, elected representatives and political parties on one side, and the citizens on the other is growing. Decision-makers at all levels need to recognise that sustainable democracy depends on participation of all citizens, especially the successional generation, in democratic decision-making processes, civil society and civil society organisations and their development into these processes.

The right to vote is a key element of participation in the democratic processes. In most countries young people below the age of 18 pay taxes when they get a job and can be convicted. At the same time they are not allowed to vote at elections. Furthermore studies show the correlation between early and lifelong participation in elections. Europe needs to foster a culture of democratic participation and intergenerational dialogue, securing a sustainable society and youth participation in democratic decision-making processes to achieve it. This is why Europe needs to grant young people the rights that fit their duties.

Democratic participation and active citizenship need to be understood as a lifelong learning process. Citizenship education is essential in order to provide, not only young people, but Europeans of all ages with the skills that enable them to make choices, take decisions and assume responsibility for their own lives within their respective democratic societies.

That's why EMI calls upon the Member States to:

- ⤴ Lower the active right to vote to the age of 16, matching the rights and responsibilities of young people in society, keeping in mind the mandatory or voluntary nature of the respective national election systems;
- ⤴ Introduce civic education as an obligatory subject in formal education systems, and accordingly adapt training for teaching staff and foster non-formal education;
- ⤴ Consider possibilities to further lower the voting age for local democratic processes;
- ⤴ Ensure a continuous dialogue with young people. Youth issues shall be on the political agenda throughout the policy cycle;
- ⤴ Support the public campaign and the tools of public expression to lower the voting age in order to enable young people to participate in democratic electoral process;
- ⤴ Support JEF-Europe and the European Youth Forum campaign on voting age 16, especially with regards to the European Parliament elections 2014.